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THE RETURN OF THE PARADIGM.

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TWO SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE LEARNING, THE VERTICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE PARADIGM AND THE STUDENT'S ANALYTICAL ABILITY, HAVE BEEN OVERLOOKED IN FAVOR OF DEVELOPING CONVERSATIONAL SKILLS BY A HORIZONTAL APPROACH IN WHICH, FOR EXAMPLE, THE MATERIAL PRESENTS THE ACCUSATIVE CASE ONE DAY AND THE FIRST PERSON PRESENT OF ALL VERBS ON ANOTHER. ALTHOUGH PARADIGMATIC SUMMARIES ARE PROVIDED AT THE END OF SOME TEXTS, THEY ARE OFTEN INSUFFICIENT FOR THE STUDENT TO UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE UNIT TO A LARGER CONTEXT AND HE RESENTS RESORTING TO MERE MIMICRY. UNTIL A STUDENT KNOWS THE UNITS OF GRAMMAR, THE CONTEXTS IN WHICH THEY APPEAR, AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THESE UNITS, HE HAS NOT FULLY LEARNED THE LANGUAGE HE IS STUDYING. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "LANGUAGE LEARNING," VOLUME 17, NUMBERS 1 AND 2, JULY 1967, PAGES 33-35. (SS)

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THE RETURN OF THE PARADIGM

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IN A COMPANION article, "The Use of Index Matrices in the Preparation of Language Textbooks" by H. Stahlke and R. M. Brend, published elsewhere in this journal, specific evidence is presented to demonstrate the usefulness of a clause paradigm in preparing pedagogical materials. Here, I wish to discuss in more general terms the paradigmatic description of language which, unfortunately, seems to have virtually disappeared from many of the current language-teaching materials.

Of course no attempt will be made here to urge a return to the former "Latin-style" grammars in which the memorization of word paradigms, together with vocabulary items, and, perhaps, some routine translation exercises, constituted practically all of the material presented to the student to be learned. This was obviously a defective pedagogical method, proven by its result—namely that the majority of students, after completing many hours (or years) of diligent study, found themselves unable to speak the language, or use it in any new situation whatever. The learning of items in the larger context in which they occur, as currently emphasized in pedagogical materials, is unquestionably a necessary addition. (Nor will I herein discuss the patent necessity of having the students pronounce the language to be learned.) I wish, rather, to point out what seem to me to be some serious lacks or defects in the currently popular style of "the oral method" of language teaching.

In several popular language textbooks now in wide use[1] great emphasis is (wisely) placed on training the student to *speak meaningful sentences, conversations, etc.*, and to have the student drill a vast amount of material so that he will "automatically" produce correct grammatical patterns. In some of these materials the pattern

[1]For example, *Modern Russian I* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World) 1964; *Modern Spanish* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.) 1960; *German*, H. Rehder and F. Twaddell (New York: Henry Holt and Co.) 1959; *Intensive Course in English*, Staff of the English Language Institute, University of Michigan; etc. These specific materials vary from the inclusion of a few paradigms in scattered places to the inclusion of *no* paradigmatic summaries at all. Some materials, however, such as *Spoken German*, J. K. Moulton and W. G. Moulton (Spoken Language Series, New York) 1944, make considerable use of paradigmatic charts, etc.

itself is *never* presented overtly—the student is supposed to glean it from the conversational material. In addition, the majority of these materials present, when pertinent, the nominative case of all noun classes at one time, the accusative case at a different time, the first person present of all verb classes on another day, question sentences at one time, etc. In so doing, the paradigm is sliced in a horizontal fashion and, in effect, much of the same information is covered as was covered in the older paradigmatic grammars, with the essential addition of the teaching of the normal spoken utterances of the language. In the process, however, the vertical organization of the paradigm is completely lost. In many of the materials in current use the student is not even provided with paradigmatic summaries in an Appendix, and it is virtually impossible to reconstruct all the forms of a given word or class without reading through the entire textbook. Even those materials which do provide paradigmatic summaries from time to time do so, consistently, only after much drill has been presented (and often *after* the student has felt the need for such a summary for some time) and frequently in a rather apologetic manner. Thus, when a new vocabulary item is presented, for example, in the nominative case, it is most difficult and often impossible for the student to discover how to predict the other case affixes that item may take.

This method seems to contain two serious difficulties: (1) a significant aspect of language structure has been completely ignored, and (2) the "analytical" ability of the adult student is not used. (I am here referring only to teaching materials designed for the college or adult student, and not to those prepared for young children.) The older student is already highly-structured in his learning process, and would like to be able to *understand* the "why" or the pattern of the larger whole, and resents being forced to merely repeat, mimic and memorize items in a parrot-like fashion, when he correctly senses that there is some underlying structure that could be taught him. Here again, I am not attacking laboratory or classroom repetition of a great deal of material which is essential in the foreign language-learning process, but, rather, am urging the *addition* to such techniques overt paradigmatic descriptions of pattern. In beginning language courses that I have personally visited, it has been frustrating to find that many textbooks do not provide answers to paradigmatic questions that frequently arise. Often teachers provide their own paradigms, in response to the urgings of their students.

In addition to the practical pedagogical value of the paradigm as argued above, at least one current linguistic theory provides a theoretical justification for the inclusion of the paradigm as part of the total description of a language. One of the basic tenets of

tagmemic theory, propounded by K. L. Pike[2] is that, in order to describe a language fully, one must be able to discuss all of its units from the points of view of their identificational-contrastive features, their ranges of variation, and their distribution in class, sequence, and matrix.[3] It is in the latter discussion, that is distribution in a field or matrix, that the paradigm comes into view. As part of the distribution of a unit, therefore, Pike includes the network of relationships which exists between similar units. A paradigm is a list of items which are in such a network of relationships—whether at the word level, or at any other level of language structure. In phonology a labelled phonemic chart shows the relationship between phonemes, a set of formulas of different clause types is the basis for defining the relationships between clauses, and a verb paradigm shows the relationships between members of a word class. The contrastive features of the items in a paradigm become the vectors of a matrix.

"Item-and-Paradigm" has long been proposed as a valid method of description by linguists[4] but this seems to have been ignored in the preparation of language-teaching materials—possibly because this type of organization of language materials was confined to the word level, as well as for the reasons of language-teaching inadequacies mentioned above. It is to be hoped, therefore, that this gap will be closed in future publication of language textbooks.

A language, I would therefore assert, has not been fully learned until one not only knows the units of grammar, phonology and lexicon, and the contexts in which they occur, but also has learned the paradigmatic relationships between those units. (The "learning" referred to here is not precisely equatable with either tacit or explicit knowledge but rather to a state that seems to be between the two—a working knowledge of paradigms which, perhaps, the student cannot explain overtly, yet allows him to handle paradigmatic relations between units.)

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[2]See, for example, his *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior*, Second Ed., in press (The Hague: Mouton and Co.); "A Syntactic Paradigm," *Language*, 39. 216-30, 1963; "Dimensions of Grammatical Constructions," *Language*, 38. 221-44, 1962; and "Non-linear Order and Anti-redundancy in German Morphological Matrices," *Zeitschrift für Mundartforschung*, 32. 193-221, 1965.

[3]"A Syntactic Paradigm," fn. 6, p. 218.

[4]See, for example, brief mention in Charles F. Hockett, "Two Models of Grammatical Description," *Word*, 10:210-34, 1954; extensive treatment in R. H. Robins, "In Defence of WP," *Transactions of the Philological Society*, 1960, pp. 116-44, 1961, and in P. H. Matthews, "Some Concepts in Word-and-Paradigm Morphology," *Foundations of Language*, 1. 268-89, 1965.

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